

DRAFTED VDC

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

1920.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

As I write my report for the year 1920, I regret that it has been delayed longer than usual, and also regret that I am writing it during a period of commercial depression so far as this district is concerned. However, I find that it needs a great coal shortage to show to us what a beautiful country we live in, if we only did not spoil it. There is no doubt that the results of the burning of coal and its various bye products causes a very serious deterioration both in the quality of the air we breathe and in the herbage which is eaten by the cattle. The same conditions are invariably manifest during a prolonged coal famine and the health of the community very quickly improves. This shows itself in the rosy faces of the children and in the empty surgeries of the Doctors. For the future, I feel strongly that one of the most important things for the welfare of a colliery district is to try to secure for it pure air, free from the impurities which evidently spring directly from the consumption of coal. The means to ensure this of course is a technical matter of which I have merely the very slightest knowledge, but I feel that it would materially improve the health of a district if it were done. Our sheep ought not to be black when nature intended them to be white. Our children ought not to be pale and puny when evidently under better conditions they can be rosy and sturdy.

As we know one of the most distressing times through which we pass every year are the times of fog in the winter. Now these fogs are not only caused by the condensation of aqueous vapour, but they obviously carry in their volume a large quantity of foreign matter which one can smell (it is unpleasant) and which discolours the face or any white clothes, and tarnishes any bright metal. All this is bad both for the health of the population, for the trade of the community and for the tempers of those exposed to it. I do not believe that it is a necessity, and think that if more care were taken much could be done to remedy the evil.

Vital Statistics.

Births :—

<i>Males.</i>				
1	Legitimate	...	...	84
2	Illegitimate	...	...	8
				—
				92
<i>Females.</i>				
1	Legitimate	...	...	72
2	Illegitimate	...	...	6
				—
				78
				—
Total	...	...	...	170

An increase of 34 over the total of last year.

Deaths :—

Males, 38; Females, 28; Total 66. A decrease of 17 as compared with last year.

21 Infants under one year of age died, amongst these are included 3 illegitimate children.

(The population for births and deaths is 5,744.)

So that the Birth rate per 1,000 of population is 29·7.

Death rate 11·4.

Infant Mortality (per 1,000 registered births) is 123·5.

An improvement all round as compared with last year.

For England and Wales.

Births—25·4. Deaths—12·4. Under one year—80.

Causes of Death :—

Measles	...	...	...	1
Influenza	...	...	...	1
Erysipelas	...	...	...	1
Diphtheria	...	...	...	2
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	...	...	...	5
Tuberculous Meningitis	...	...	...	1
Cancer	...	...	...	6
Rheumatic Fever	...	...	...	2

Heart Disease	...	...	...	2
Bronchitis	...	...	...	6
Pneumonia	...	...	...	8
Other Respiratory Diseases	...			1
Diarrhoea	...	...	...	4
Nephritis	...	...	...	3
Congenital Debility	...	...	...	5
Violence	...	...	...	2
Other Diseases	...	...	...	16

Through most of the year the population has been fairly well-to-do, and there has not been much occasion for poor law relief. The neighbouring hospitals, Sheffield, Leeds and Barnsley have all been overcrowded and nearly always have long lists of applicants awaiting an empty bed. There have not been many cases of Diphtheria, but several of those which were notified, were of a very malignant type.

The Water Supply.

The Dearne Valley Water Co. which used to supply the district, sold its interests to "a combine" of the various Townships which it used to supply. At times, after an interruption in the service, the water supplied has been "dirty" and I have had complaints of this; so far as I know, no harm has resulted from it.

The rivers have been fairly clean and do not smell, but during the Winter the Dearne frequently overflows and does a good deal of damage to the fields and paths; sometimes the flood gets on to the main highway at Darfield Bridge. The houses in this district are then damp and generally have water in their cellars. If the obstacles (dead trees etc.) which partly dam the river were removed, and the banks which have been erected in past years were repaired much of this damage might be avoided.

Drainage and Sewerage.

The Drainage and Sewerage are much the same as they have been in the past, but a large grit intercepting chamber has been made near Darfield Station to help to keep the low level section near the river as free from obstruction as may be.

There have been no complaints as to the working of the sewage farm and the effluent has invariably proved to be satisfactory in its quality.

Scavenging.

The Scavenging has been done in the same way as in the past, and has been done satisfactorily; I have not noticed the delay in removal of heaps of night soil brought up from inaccessible privies so much as in the past years.

Sewage Disposal Works.

The effluent discharging from the works into the River Dearne is quite satisfactory. Three samples have been taken by the West Riding Rivers Board.

Result of analysis, in parts per 100,000 :—

Total Solids	...	...	...	·80
Nitric Nitrogen	...	...	...	3·54
Oxygen absorbed	...	...	...	·47

Remarks—Good.

112 samples have been analyzed in the works laboratory.

Result of analysis, in parts per 100,000 :—

Nitric Nitrogen	...	...	...	3·30
Oxygen absorbed	...	...	...	40

Remarks—Good.

The average purification equals 96 per cent.

Cleaning of the Streets.

There is still too much loose refuse thrown on to the streets, though the general condition has improved during the year, and the hawkers do not throw their offal about as they did. Owing to the gradual substitution of motor for horse traffic, there is a general shortage and demand for horse manure; and it is quite a common thing to see a couple of small boys going about with a little two-wheeled go-cart collecting any horse manure which they can find on the roads, for use in the allotments. This assists in keeping the district clean; the main impurities now being paper soiled in various ways, empty and battered tin cans and broken glass. The latter seems to be the hall mark of the colliery township; it is rarely seen in an agricultural district, but is almost invariable in a colliery Urban District.

Schools.

No change of any importance in the condition of the schools, but there have been complaints both by the teaching staff and by the parents, of the small number of teachers compared with the large number of children whom they have to teach.

No closure of the schools has been necessary, though the attendance was at one time much depleted by German Measles and at another by Chicken Pox.

A detailed report of the condition of the school yards was made during the year.

Milk Supply.

I notice that very few houses have satisfactory keeping places for milk, and now that the district is so much overcrowded, this condition is intensified. New houses do not seem to be forthcoming, so the milk problem should be attacked in another way and milk should only be supplied to the population in the bottled form. This has many advantages; each person receives the amount of cream to which he or she is entitled, there is less chance of adulteration, the milk will keep fresh even where there is no satisfactory keeping place, and is not exposed to contamination by flies or dust. The distribution is done more easily than by the usual milk churn and to cover the extra labour involved in the washing and re-charging the used bottles a small extra cost is charged for each pint of milk sold. The system is sound and works well in practice.

Glaxo.

There has been a regular sale of Glaxo at the Infant Clinic held each Tuesday. This is so far as possible restricted to the feeding of infants, or at any rate of children under 2 years of age. There is a considerable demand for it, and there are many complaints if the supply for any reason is not available.

Unsound Food.

Some unsound food was condemned, no action taken under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act.

Infectious Diseases notified during the year.

Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	40
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	27
T.B. of Lung	...	...	...	...	16
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	12
Diphtheria	...	...	...	...	9
T B. Glands of Neck	...	...	...	...	6
Encephalitis Lethargica	...	...	...	...	2
Poliomyelitis	...	...	...	...	1
Infantile Paralysis	...	...	...	...	1
T.B. of Meninges	...	...	...	...	1
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	...	...	...	...	1
Dysentery	...	...	...	...	1
Puerperal Fever	...	...	...	...	1
Malaria	...	...	...	...	1
Enteric Fever	...	...	...	...	1

During the year, an Infants' Clinic has been established, and on the whole has been well attended. There is no doubt that a good many minor illnesses have been detected and remedied as the result of it, but more care should be taken by parents not to bring children to these centres who are suffering from infectious or contagious disease. The Centre has not been open very long, and already the books shew evidence of children having been brought to the Clinic who were suffering from Measles, German Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox and Scabies. This in spite of the public statements which have been made that infectious diseases should NOT be brought to the Clinic. One of the statistics obtained at the Clinic relates to the housing question; I find that about two-thirds of the new babies are born into houses (generally 4 rooms) which contain two families; in one of these instances the remark was made that "that they were already crowded, but that was nothing to what their future condition would be when the Brother with his family returned from Canada, and he is on the sea now."

I have heard many discussions on the housing question at your Council meetings, and we seem to have prospects of houses but do not get them. Well! we cannot go on like this, and I think that if the Council is unable to get permanent houses put up, that they ought to make some temporary accomodation for the surplus population. We have object lessons before us; there are sinkers' hats in Low Valley, and

surface workers' huts at Little Houghton. I do not say that these are ideal residences, but I do find that the incidence of disease is no higher in these than in the houses of a more permanent character.

When you consider the causes of death, we find that one third of the number is due to diseases of the respiratory organs. To reduce this mortality we undoubtedly require pure air, both within and without the houses. To get it inside, you must have sufficient cubic space per person, and to get it outside, you must rid the air of the various impurities which go into it (mainly derived from the combustion of coal and its bye products). Further, both children and adults require pure milk, as I mentioned in the earlier part of my report.

On the whole, the year has been a good one, and I have great hopes that if we get improvements effected in the way I have suggested that we can materially reduce our infant mortality which is still our weak spot.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

R. F. CASTLE.

DARFIELD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT.

COUNCIL OFFICES,

DARFIELD.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

After a lapse of four years I beg to again submit to you my Annual Report as Sanitary Inspector, this time for the year 1920.

Scavenging.

The system in vogue for several years prior to 1916 of removing nightsoil in the night-time has not been reinstated. This system, although it had its advantages, had a many disadvantages which were proved by experience.

During the year under report the work has been executed between the hours of 7 a.m. and 3 p.m., and an arrangement whereby any cases where cause for complaint might be made are attended to at the commencement of the day's work, effectively prevents such causes arising. The fact that no serious complaint has been received during the year proves to a great extent its practicability.

The improvement effected in the method of removal in New Street is undoubtedly good. You will remember that by negotiating with the adjoining landowner, permission was obtained to use a cart road on the land for the purpose of nightsoil removal, which, with one exception, entirely obviates the necessity of dumping in the public street.

The whole of the district is worked through systematically every 3 to 4 weeks, and all refuse is collected weekly with one or two exceptions.

Material has been disposed of principally on the Council's own tip which, although central for the district, is 200 yards or more from the nearest house.

Only a very small proportion of nightsoil has been taken on to the land as only two farmers in the district will accept any. This is only to be expected considering the rough nature of the material, brought about by two reasons :—

1. Inability to get owners of property to keep ashpit screens in a good state of repair in consequence of the scarcity and high cost of labour during and since the war.
2. A disinclination on the part of a certain section of the population to screen ashes if same can be disposed of without this trouble, and where free coal is obtained (I refer to the general system of coal allowance to miners) the necessity, in a many cases, to screen ashes in order to separate good combustible material does not arise.

I regret to have to say it but this latter practice has certainly increased during and since the war, and this, together with the persistent untidyness in some parts of the district, neither tends to improve the immediate precincts of the houses nor the health of the inhabitants, and is very disheartening to the staff responsible for the sanitary condition of the district generally.

During the year 3,595 ashpit emptyings have taken place and 4,396 loads of nightsoil and dry refuse have been removed. Compared with the year 1915, the latest figures available, there is a decrease of 228 ashpit emptyings and an increase of 313 loads of material removed. This increase in number of loads removed, is in all probability, caused by an increase in population without even the corresponding increase in new houses. The decrease in number of ashpit emptyings helps to support this theory.

Annual Cost of Scavenging.

The total cost of this department for the last financial year was £1,098 or 5/- per load removed. The cost for the year 1915-16 was £480 or 2/4 per load removed.

The increased expenditure is accounted for by a 135% advance in wages and a corresponding advance in cost of materials &c.

Housing Inspection.

In the latter part of 1919 the Medical Officer and myself made an inspection of 59 houses which were in a doubtful condition of repair. These were not dealt with until early 1920 when preliminary notices were served on owners to remedy defects in 45 houses.

The principal defects were as follows :—

Dampness of walls	36 cases.
No through ventilation	33 „
Deficient lighting	6 „
Defective Flues Spouts	12 „

In 7 houses the work of repairs and improvements has been satisfactorily carried out, and in 11 other houses the work is in hand. This leaves 27 houses yet to receive attention.

The following general inspections were also made during the year... .. 89 houses.

Found satisfactory	81
Preliminary notices served	8
Defects remedied	7
In hand	1

Nuisances.

During the course of the systematic inspections of the district, nuisances were discovered and registered totalling 57 ; In hand from 1919, 6 ; Number abated, 61 ; In hand, 2.

These nuisances can be classified as follows :—

1. Blocked footpath channel or yard gullies	6
2. „ Sink gullies	3
3. „ Urinal gullies	8
4. „ Drains apart from the above	5
5. „ Waste Water Closets	2
6. „ Fresh Water Closets	3
7. Defective W.C. Flushing Cistern	1
8. Defective Privy Midden doors and screens	16
9. Leakage from privy middens	6
10. Defective movable pail	1
11. Overflowing cesspool	1
12. Defective eaves spouting	5
Total	57

Statutory notices served under the Public					
Health Acts...	...	...	...	...	10
Complied with	...	...	...	...	9
					<hr/>
In hand				...	1

Conversions.

Two conversions from privies to fresh water closets have been made during the year.

Four notices under Section 36 P.H.A., 1875, have been served to provide fresh water closets in substitution of existing privies. These notices have not yet been complied with.

Privy conversions is undoubtedly one of the most vital questions affecting the district and one which must eventually receive the very serious consideration of the Council.

Any improvement gained, in the form of more healthy surroundings, cannot help but result in improvement in the health of the inhabitants, and this alone would far outweigh the financial responsibilities incurred.

Then again Darfield can be proud in the fact of possessing one of the most successful sewage disposal installations in the country, and it is a great pity that the fullest advantage cannot be taken of the works. The ultimate gain from a financial standpoint would also be worthy of consideration.

Whether or not a systematic scheme of privy conversions throughout the area of the Dearne Valley Water Board would put any undue strain on their resources is a matter outside the scope of my report, but I have no doubt the Board will be able to meet the demand should it arise.

Water Supply.

Three houses previously obtaining water from wells have been connected up with service water.

No samples of drinking water have been taken for analysis during the year.

Disinfection.

I have disinfected houses after removal to hospital of 34 cases of infectious diseases.

Cowsheds and Slaughter Houses.

We have 6 registered cowkeepers with 10 cowsheds, also one licensed and 6 registered slaughter houses. These have been regularly inspected during the year, and the limewashing is carried out at the usual times.

Unsound Meat.

One carcase of beef affected with Generalised Tuberculosis and 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ dozen rabbits, all of which were voluntarily submitted for examination, have been condemned as unfit for human consumption.

Pig and Poultry Keeping &c.

Pigkeeping is on the increase again and is a form of thrift which should be encouraged especially when the pigs can be kept on gardens away from the houses. The more kitchen refuse is kept for pig feeding the less there is to place in the dust bin or be scattered about the back yard. I have had very little cause for complaint in the manner in which pigs have been kept.

A very noticable development as a result of the war was the practice of erecting wooden structures of all shapes and sizes in back yards for the purpose of poultry and rabbit keeping &c. The smaller the back yard the bigger the structure seemed to be the idea. This practice was not limited to the smaller or poorer type of dwelling but was, I think, more pronounced in the better parts of the district. Several of the more objectionable cases have been remedied by removal to available gardens.

New Property.

No new houses have been erected during the year.

In conclusion, I beg to thank the Members of the Council and my Colleagues for their help and kind consideration of any matters brought before them during the year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

E. HAMMERTON.